

Investigation of Life Satisfaction Levels and Leisure Constraints of Women Employees

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Abstract

Female employees are believed to encounter certain barriers to leisure participation and experience a subsequent decrease in life satisfaction. This correlational study assessed the leisure constraints and life satisfaction levels of working women and their relationship with each other and several demographic characteristics. A total of 210 participants (mean age 31.29 ± 7.02 years) selected by convenience sampling completed the Leisure Constraints Scale (LCS) and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, MANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis. Mean LCS and SWLS scores showed no significant differences according to age, marital status, or exercise participation ($p > .05$). There was a weak negative correlation between mean scores on the SWLS and LCS 'facilities' subscale ($r = -.156$; $p < .05$), suggesting that an increase in facility-related barriers to leisure participation may be related to lower life satisfaction in women employees. Further studies are needed to identify other factors associated with life satisfaction among working women.

Keywords: Leisure, life Satisfaction, leisure constraints

Kadın Çalışanların Serbest Zaman Engelleri ile Yaşam Doyumu Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi

Özet

Kadın çalışanların serbest zaman katılımında belirli engellerle karşılaştıkları ve bunun sonucunda yaşam doyumlarında düşüş yaşadıkları düşünülmektedir. Bu ilişkisel çalışma, çalışan kadınların serbest zaman kısıtlamaları ve yaşam doyumu düzeylerini ve bunların birbirleriyle ve çeşitli demografik özelliklerle ilişkisini değerlendirmiştir. Kolayda örnekleme yoluyla seçilen toplam 210 katılımcı (ortalama yaş 31.29 ± 7.02 yıl) Serbest Zaman Engelleri Ölçeği (SZEÖ) ve Yaşam Doyum Ölçeğini (YDÖ) doldurmuştur. Veriler tanımlayıcı istatistikler, ANOVA, MANOVA ve Pearson korelasyon analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Ortalama SZEÖ ve YDÖ puanları yaş, medeni durum veya egzersiz katılımına göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermemiştir ($p > .05$). YDÖ ve SZEÖ 'tesisler' alt ölçeğindeki ortalama puanlar arasında zayıf bir negatif korelasyon vardır ($r = -.156$; $p < .05$), bu da serbest zaman katılımına yönelik tesisle ilgili engellerdeki artışın kadın çalışanlarda daha düşük yaşam doyumu ile ilişkili olabileceğini düşündürmektedir. Çalışan kadınlar arasında yaşam doyumu ile ilişkili diğer faktörleri belirlemek için daha fazla çalışmaya ihtiyaç bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Serbest zaman, yaşam doyumu, serbest zaman engelleri

1. INTRODUCTION

Living a good life involves having varied life experiences and deriving satisfaction from life. Life satisfaction is defined as subjective well-being or, in other words, being happy. Feeling physically and mentally healthy increases one's sense of well-being (i.e., happiness) and improves life satisfaction. Concepts like subjective well-being and life satisfaction have become topics that are frequently studied within the subject of happiness in the field of positive psychology. The questions of how people can be satisfied with life, be happy, and improve their quality of life have become an important issue with implications on the individual and societal level.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in interest in women's ways of coping with difficulties related to leisure activities. This is because leisure activities are associated with independence, as they provide women with opportunities to define and express their identities. When evaluated in this context, there is a need to support women's leisure participation, especially psychologically. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate working women's life satisfaction and leisure constraints according to several sociodemographic characteristics and determine the relationship between these two variables.

Leisure

The concept of leisure is believed to have emerged in ancient times and continued to develop throughout history (Hunnicut, 2006). Nutrition was seen as the most important activity in primitive societies, as it is among the most basic physiological needs. For this reason, people primarily engaged in activities such as farming and hunting. Evidence that people organized recreational activities or played games in their free time after these obligatory activities shows that the tradition of leisure is very old (Borsay, 2006).

Attempts to define the concept of leisure, which varies by individual, has led to some debate among researchers (Kelly, 2012). Leisure has been defined as a time characterized by a sense of freedom and independence from work and other obligations (Dumazedier, 1974). Kelly (2012) expressed it as the feeling of satisfaction obtained from participating in voluntary activities. The concept of leisure is also affected by variables such as country, group, gender, and culture (Parlakılıdız & Koçak, 2022). The simplest definition of this concept is the opposite of work, but this definition has lost its universality and started to taken on different meanings for different people (Roberts, 2010).

Considering that the 21st century is known as the age of technology and internet, individuals in many countries devote their leisure to such physically passive pursuits, especially with the widespread use of mobile phones and computers (Li et al., 2015). For this reason, it is considered more valuable to emphasize the importance of the concept of leisure rather than its definition (Gürbüz & Henderson, 2013). Basically, any activity that is done voluntarily and with pleasure meets the need for leisure (Kaplan, 1980). In this respect, everyone's definition may be different because enjoyment is subjective (Parlakılıdız & Koçak, 2022). However, the main factors that should be present in every leisure activity are the free choice of doing this activity and the satisfaction of the participant (Dasyılva, 2018).

Life Satisfaction

Researchers define life satisfaction as the results or situations that result from the comparison of what an individual experiences during life with their expectations and desires (Paolini et al., 2006). Thus, it represents a cognitive and affective self-assessment of life overall and reflects general subjective well-being as opposed to current feelings (Diener et al., 2009). Questions of what makes people happy and unhappy have long fascinated researchers, and the issue of life satisfaction has attracted the attention of psychologists within the scope of the positive psychology movement. Positive psychology focuses on the study of individual strengths and virtues that support personal and social development (Seligman

& Czikszentmihalyi, 2000). It can be said that the first and perhaps most important goal of most people is to live a satisfying or good life. Also, whether or not people tend to live satisfying lives is among the indicators that influences general perceptions of a region or country. Therefore, it is important to determine the main factors affecting life satisfaction in society (Berggren & Bjørnskov, 2020).

Diener et al. (2009) proposed three main theoretical approaches to explain life satisfaction at the micro level. The first is based on meeting needs, the second is based on engagement in meaningful activities, and the third is related to genetic theories and personality dispositions and suggests that a person has a fairly stable level of life satisfaction in relation to their personality. Another approach to understanding life satisfaction is macro-oriented, typically in the sense of linking the rules applicable in a country or region to the life experiences of individuals (Berggren & Bjørnskov, 2020). The main rationale for research on life satisfaction is its impact on social/individual welfare evaluations, which official institutions are more likely to take into consideration.

Previous research has shown that positive life satisfaction is crucial for normal life adjustment. A lack of life satisfaction has been linked to higher risk of negative outcomes such as psychological illness (Kitsantas et al., 2003). Studies show that life satisfaction levels do not differ by gender (Çakır et al., 2016; Serdar et al., 2018). Extensive case studies in many countries (Michalos, 2012) and a meta-analysis of 146 studies by Okun et al. (1984) support the conclusion that both women and men feel equally satisfied and happy with life.

Leisure and Leisure Participation in Women

Leisure is analyzed and defined through the dimensions of observable activity, discretionary time, context, and subjective experience (Primeau, 2003). Today, there is also a growing need regarding how to evaluate leisure in relation to the emerging and constantly advancing technology (Blackshaw, 2010). The subjective experience of leisure includes characteristics such as fun, intrinsic motivation, freedom from restriction, and choice. (Tinsley et al., 1993). Although this perspective of leisure is frequently used in practice and research, it is considered problematic, firstly because it is based on ethnocentric Western structures and secondly because researchers noncritically frame the practices and experiences of individuals without equivalent words in their language within their definitions of leisure (Iwasaki et al., 2007).

Research on recreation participation shows that it positively impacts the well-being of diverse populations, from patients with spinal cord injuries to women with breast cancer (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). Leisure participation may have positive effects on topics covered by positive psychology such as life satisfaction, well-being, and happiness. Caldwell (2005) classified leisure studies as those concerned with leisure for health promotion/enhancement, stress coping, and overcoming negative life events. A study conducted with immigrant women determined that leisure stress coping strategies were related to the women's circumstances and include engaging in leisure activities that provide distraction and temporary stress relief (palliative coping), improve one's mood (mood enhancement), or provide social support (leisure companionship) (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000).

The factors of happiness are divided into four categories: attributable factors such as gender and race; obtained resources such as income, education and control of resources, such as marital status; self-evaluation of living conditions such as social relations; and participation in social life such as active participation in political life (Shin and Johnson, 1978). Satisfaction with life is dependent on factors such as age, socioeconomic status, family structure, and education or employment status. All of these domains have a high impact on one's life satisfaction. These domains form the roles that a person assumes, and when an individual has more than one role, a decrease in life satisfaction seems likely

(Behlau, 2010). Studies have indicated that women face more obstacles to leisure participation than men (Bulut & Koçak, 2016; Soyer et al., 2019).

Leisure Constraints

Research on leisure activities in women has mainly focused on middle-class women living in Western countries, but researches are now spreading outside of America and Europe. Leisure research has identified several important characteristics of physical leisure activities (e.g., enjoyment, self-determination, social support) that promote women's mental health (Adamson & Parker, 2006; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003).

Leisure constraints have increased in importance in the leisure literature since the 1980s (Jackson, 1983; Searle and Jackson, 1985) and are defined as restrictive factors that can prevent leisure participation (Dergance, 2003). The most widely used model to conceptualize leisure constraints is the Hierarchical Leisure Constraints Theory, which is divided into three categories: structural, personal (intrapersonal), and interpersonal (Crawford et al., 1991).

Interest in women's approach to coping with leisure constraints has increasing considerably, because leisure activities provide women the opportunity to define and express their identities and are thus associated with independence (Shaw, 2005). In addition to domestic work, traditional roles such as paid work pose a significant barrier to women's participation in leisure activities. When studies on leisure time constraints among women are examined collectively, it is seen that most of the studies on women and leisure time are related to the difficulties faced by women (Usher & Gomez, 2018). Limited budget, lack of access, social class, marriage, parenting, and time constraints stand out among these challenges (Qiu et al., 2018). Factors affecting leisure time participation can be divided into three groups. The first group includes individual factors. Time, material resources, social class, education level, and demographic factors are considered individual factors. The second group is the opportunity and support factor, which includes technology and resources. The last group is the factor related to conditions and circumstances, which involves cultural and geographical factors (Torkildsen, 2005). Approaches to coping with leisure constraints are theoretically divided into two groups: cognitive (internal) and behavioral (structural and interpersonal) coping strategies (Scott, 1991). Financial management, interpersonal relationships, time management, physical fitness strategies, and skill acquisition can be given as examples of behavioral coping strategies, while internal validation is an example of cognitive coping strategies (Jackson, 1993).

Relationship between Leisure Constraints and Life Satisfaction

The literature evidence suggests that active leisure participation is positively associated with life satisfaction (Mansfield et al., 2020; Mutz et al., 2021; Park et al., 2023; Yoon et al., 2020). Although obstacles to leisure participation can be encountered by all people, working women in particular face many barriers and associated negative feelings. Working women face leisure constraints such as professional obligations, lack of time, and housework, and their life satisfaction levels are negatively affected (Wu et al., 2021). The existing evidence suggests a universal and systematic relationship between perceived life satisfaction and leisure constraints, and this relationship may be affected by age and gender. In this study, we examined working women's levels of life satisfaction and leisure constraints according to several individual characteristics and analyzed the relationship between these two variables. Specifically, our hypotheses were that life satisfaction and leisure constraint scores would differ significantly among working women depending on their marital status and exercise participation. We also hypothesized that leisure constraint scores would be significantly associated with age and that life satisfaction and leisure constraint scores would be significantly correlated.

2. MATERIAL & METHODS

Study group

This correlational study was conducted with women working in public institutions in Ankara. The study universe comprised women over the age of 18 working in public institutions with more than 1000 employees in Ankara. The study sample consisted of 210 women (mean age: 31.29 ± 7.02) selected by convenience sampling from these public institutions. The participants' demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal information of female employees participating in the research

Variable	Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Marital status	Single	88	41.9
	Married	122	58.1
Work experience	< 5 years	66	31.4
	6-10 years	63	30.0
	11-15 years	37	17.6
	16-20 years	44	21.0
Exercise Participation	Yes	110	52.4
	No	100	47.6
	Total	210	100

Data Collection Tools

The study data were obtained with the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), Leisure Constraints Scale (LCS), and a demographic information form including questions about the participants' age, work experience, marital status, and exercise participation.

Satisfaction With Life Scale

The SWLS was created by Diener et al. (1985) and the Turkish adaptation study was conducted by Yetim (1991). The single-dimension scale consists of 5 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The Cronbach's alpha value was found to be .76 in the present study.

Leisure Constraints Scale

Alexandris and Carroll (1997) developed the LCS and Gürbüz et al. (2012) conducted the Turkish adaptation study. It is a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 18 items in 6 subscales: lack of information, lack of interest, lack of partners, facilities, time, and individual/psychological. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha values for the subscales were between .71 and .87.

Data Collection

The participants completed the data collection forms in face-to-face meetings held at the women's workplaces. Detailed information about the purpose of the study and how to complete the data collection form were included in the instructions to the participants. Filling in the form took between 8-10 minutes.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to determine the descriptive characteristics of the individuals participating in the research. Skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the data were normally distributed. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated for the scales used. The study data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA, MANOVA, independent samples t-test, and Pearson correlation analysis (SPSS version 23 statistical package program). The level of significance was accepted as $p > .05$ for all tests.

3. RESULTS

In this study, we examined the demographic characteristics of marital status, exercise participation, and age as factors possibly associated with life satisfaction and leisure constraints. There were no significant differences in SWLS or LCS scores between single and married women ($p>.05$; Table 2). When the women were grouped according to those who reported engaging in regular exercise and those who did not, there were also no differences in SWLS or LCS scores ($p>.05$; Table 3). Additionally, correlation analysis between age and LCS scores revealed no significant relationship ($p>.05$; Table 4).

Table 2. Comparison of SWLS and LCS scores by marital status

Scale	Single (n=88)		Married (n=122)		<i>p</i> *
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
SWLS	4.11	0.45	4.13	0.53	.77
LCS					<i>p</i> **
Individual/psychological	2.46	0.73	2.38	0.71	.44
Lack of information	2.50	0.64	2.43	0.69	.46
Facilities	2.84	0.57	2.75	0.67	.27
Lack of partners	2.52	0.71	2.50	0.71	.79
Time	2.67	0.49	2.71	0.50	.55
Lack of interest	2.55	0.42	2.50	0.47	.44

SWLS: Satisfaction With Life Scale, LCS: Leisure Constraints Scale, *Independent *t*-test, **MANOVA

Table 3. Comparison of SWLS and LCS scores by exercise participation

Scale	Regular Exercise (n=110)		No Regular Exercise (n=100)		<i>p</i> *
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
SWLS	4.08	0.48	4.17	0.51	.16
LCS					<i>p</i> **
Individual/psychological	2.40	0.75	2.43	0.68	.71
Lack of information	2.41	0.69	2.51	0.65	.30
Facilities	2.77	0.67	2.80	0.59	.75
Lack of partners	2.54	0.74	2.47	0.67	.46
Time	2.70	0.51	2.69	0.48	.96
Lack of interest	2.52	0.44	2.53	0.46	.96

SWLS: Satisfaction With Life Scale, LCS: Leisure Constraints Scale, *Independent *t*-test, **MANOVA

In the correlation analysis between age and LCS scores, there are no correlation was detected between mean scores for the age and LCS subscale ($p>0.05$; Table 4).

Table 4. Correlation analysis between age and LCS scores

		Age	Individual/ Psychological	Lack of Information	Facilities	Lack of Partners	Time	Lack of Interest
Individual/ Psychological	r	.000	1					
	p	.999						
Lack of Information	r	-.027	.515**	1				
	p	.700	.000					
Facilities	r	-.002	.592**	.582**	1			
	p	.971	.000	.000				
Lack of Partners	r	.009	.507**	.272**	.491**	1		
	p	.892	.000	.000	.000			
Time	r	.101	.305**	.320**	.217**	.023	1	
	p	.145	.000	.000	.002	.741		
Lack of Interest	r	.036	.333**	.478**	.493**	.299**	.298**	1
	p	.608	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

Table 5. Correlation analysis between LCS and SWLS scores

		LCS					
		Individual/ Psychological	Lack of Information	Facilities	Lack of Partners	Time	Lack of Interest
SWLS	r	.051	-.048	-.156*	-.078	.037	-.071
	p	.458	.493	.024	.262	.590	.306

In the correlation analysis between SWLS and LCS scores, a weak negative correlation was detected between mean scores for the SWLS and the LCS 'facilities' subscale ($r=-.156$, $p>.05$; Table 5).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study evaluated leisure constraints and life satisfaction in working women according to several demographic characteristics and examined the relationship between the two variables. Our results showed no statistically significant differences in participants' mean SWLS and LCS scores according to marital status. This finding contradicts earlier studies demonstrating a relationship between marital status and leisure participation, leisure constraints, and life satisfaction (Ağyar, 2014; Chick et al., 2015; Lapa, 2013). It has been reported previously that single people were more involved in leisure activities than married people (Rich et al., 2022). Chipperfield and Havens (2001) also reported that life satisfaction level decreased if marital status remains stable for seven years or when there is a change (e.g., divorce, death). In another study, it was observed that married women had higher life satisfaction levels than singles (Botha and Booysen, 2013). The lack of a significant difference in our study according to marital status may be that married individuals participate in leisure activities with their spouse or family, while single women participate in leisure activities alone or with friends (Mirehie & Gibson, 2020). The spread of leisure culture and resulting increase in leisure participation may also be factors.

We also observed no statistically significant differences in the participants' mean SWLS and LCS scores based on exercise participation. Studies have shown that exercise participation contributes positively to psychological issues such as well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness (Başar, 2018; Petty & Trussell, 2021; Sarıkan, 2021). However, the reason why there was no difference in this study may also be due to the fact that the women participated in different leisure activities apart from exercise participation.

Studies have shown that there are differences in leisure constraints according to age (Lakot, 2015). Age-related differences have been reported in the LCS 'time' subscale (Ekinci et al., 2014), 'individual/psychological' and 'facilities' subscales, and in the 'time' and 'lack of partners' subscales. In our study, no significant association was found between the participants' mean LCS scores and age, consistent with one previous study suggesting that LCS scores did not vary by age.

In our analysis of the relationship between LCS and SWLS scores, the only statistically significant relationship detected was a very weak negative correlation between mean LCS 'facility' subscale and SWLS scores. Lack of facilities and time have been identified as constraints to leisure participation in previous studies (Amin et al., 2011; Emir et al., 2012). When studies with similar results to ours are examined, inadequate facilities were emphasized as the only obstacle in different demographic groups (Koçak, 2017; Wan et al., 2023). These findings suggest that removing the facility barrier may lead to an increase in participation in leisure activities and thus in life satisfaction levels. Barriers faced by participants under the 'facilities' dimension may include a scarcity of facilities, long distances to reach available facilities, lack of information about available facilities, and their preference for same-sex facilities (Andrade et al., 2019; Auster, 2001; Hester, 2023; Little, 2002; Nieri and Hughes, 2023).

Bal Turan et al. (2019) observed an inverse relationship between participants' life satisfaction scores and their leisure constraints scores in the 'lack of interest,' 'lack of knowledge,' and 'individual/psychological' subscales. In addition, Çakır et al. (2016) observed that gender was a significant factor for leisure constraint scores and that monthly income was a significant factor in life satisfaction levels.

In conclusion, this study and related studies suggest that there is a negative relationship between working women's life satisfaction and barriers to leisure participation. We concluded that increased facility-related leisure constraints may be associated with lower life satisfaction scores. This finding highlights the importance of developing policies and support mechanisms to reduce leisure constraints of women employees in order to increase their life satisfaction. Future studies can evaluate different populations in different regions, analyze the relationship of other factors to life satisfaction through structural equation modeling, and explore solutions such as establishing facilities where working women can participate in leisure activities at appropriate times in their workplaces.

Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors in this study.

Information related to Ethics Committee

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee

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